

Concept Note and Agenda

Women's Entrepreneurship & MSME Development in the Southern Mediterranean Region

Sub-Regional Events

1. Background

The overall objectives of the “Women Entrepreneurship” Activity, implemented by the EBESM Project (“Enhancement of the Business Environment in the Southern Mediterranean”) are to contribute to reducing unemployment and poverty in the MED region by enhancing policies to support women’s entrepreneurship development. This is expected to substantially increase the number of women starting businesses in the MED region.

In particular, this activity aims at identifying main obstacles and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs to initiate or develop their business, and also to identify success stories that could be used as models for good practices. It will collect, through surveys in each country, empirical evidence on the impact of existing policies on women setting up businesses to help improve existing policies.

This, in turn, will help local authorities represented by the SBA Coordinators and the members of the Working Group on “Women Entrepreneurships” to enhance the policy framework for women entrepreneurship. It will help as well grassroots women and/or entrepreneurs’ associations become vocal in advocating specific public policies for supporting women’s entrepreneurship in the MED region.

To reach objectives, a survey was carried from November 2016 to January 2017 in seven MED countries, namely, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. The survey (person-to-person interviews) targeted **non-university educated women entrepreneurs**; this non-university educated group is selected as a proxy for the low to low-middle income group of women entrepreneurs. The objectives of the survey are to collect empirical evidence on the impact of existing policies on women entrepreneurship in order to contribute to enhance them. The surveys are complemented by a series of country reports that describe the ecosystem and the policy framework that support women entrepreneurs in each country.

A regional consolidated report with a detailed analysis aiming at issuing evidence-based policy recommendations for national authorities has been produced by the Project. The Report, supported by data collected from the seven-country surveys and the related national reports, identifies obstacles, challenges and favourable factors that women encounter when doing business; it also identifies good practices, as well as obstacles, that may inform women entrepreneurs in the future on better ways to conduct their business.

Policy recommendations at various institutional levels are formulated. These recommendations are based on the results of the surveys and also on the recommendations formulated by the participants to two focus groups organised at sub-regional level by the

Project in March 2017, in Tunis for the Maghreb countries (i.e. Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco), and in Cairo for the Mashreq region (i.e. Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon).

Finally, this Report will be very useful to women associations as a negotiation and policy tool to ensure that their views are objectively voiced and to advocate for specific policy implementation.

2. Objectives of the workshops

The results of this analytical work will be disseminated and discussed among participants and will provide important inputs to feed and deepen the policy dialogue to help MED partners implement reforms in the domain of woman entrepreneurship. It will provide as well a platform for policy dialogue, peer learning, sharing experiences and good practices (North-South and South-South) among the policymakers, representatives of the private sector, microfinance institutions, civil society and experts.

Three workshops will be organised at sub-regional level as follows:

- 1- Tunis, on 21 September for Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco;
- 2- Beirut, on 28 September for Egypt and Lebanon;
- 3- Amman, on 2 October 2017 for Jordan and Palestine.

The objectives of these workshops are to:

- 1- Present and discuss the key findings, best practices and policy recommendations included in the Report;
- 2- Receive participants' feedback on the Report; and
- 3- Set up the composition of a public-private dialogue platform as well as action plans to contribute to enhancing the situation of women entrepreneurs at country level.

3. Who will attend?

The workshop will gather five participants per country. In order to ensure an effective dialogue between main stakeholders, participants shall be selected as follows:

- Public sector representative directly involved in women entrepreneurship development;
- Representative of an active NGO focusing on women or women entrepreneurs development;
- Representative of a microfinance institution.
- The SBA coordinator;
- The women entrepreneurship advisor;

4. Workshop Programme

These one-day workshops will be structured as follows.

09:00 – Registration of participants

09:30-09:45 – What do we want to achieve together today?

EBESM Team Leader – SBA Coordinator

09:45-10:45 – Presentation of the results of the Report

(key findings, good practices, policy recommendations)

Experts EBESM

10:45-11:00 - Coffee Break

11:00-12:00 – Testimonial of women entrepreneurs

Four women will be invited to share their experience with the participants.

12:00-13:00 – Feedback/comments on the report and sharing of good experiences by the participants

13:00-14:00 – Lunch

14:00-15:15 – Group Work (national work groups)

Designing action plans to contribute to enhance existing policies as well as discussing the composition of a Public-Private dialogue (PPD) mechanism (who should do what and when, including in terms of following up and monitoring the implementation of the action plans)

Moderators: EBESM project experts– Rapporteurs: one member of the group

15:15-15:30 – Coffee break

15:30-16:15 – Plenary Session: discussion of the results reached by the work groups, and presentation of the results by the rapporteurs.

16:15 The way forward: Recommendations for the European Commission, in preparation of the regional seminar that will be conducted in Brussels (venue/date to be confirmed), and for possible coordination with existing platforms such as those by the OECD, the UfM/UNIDO, UN Women, the Arab League, etc.

16:30 – End of the workshop.

The workshop will be supported by EBESM project experts who will provide all participants with a brief summary after the workshop.

Photos of workshop will be taken, following approval of the participants, and will be uploaded on the project website and in a brochure. Short videos may be prepared as well.